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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-seventh session

76th plenary meeting
Monday, 16 December 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 23 (*continued*)

United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage

Draft resolution (A/57/L.59)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of agenda item 23, entitled "United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage". Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this agenda item at the 67th plenary meeting on 4 December 2002. In this connection, the Assembly has before it the draft resolution issued as document A/57/L.59.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.59.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Egypt is pleased to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.59 on the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. The draft resolution refers to the conclusion of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, 2002, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 56/8 in its previous session.

The draft resolution stresses the need for the international community to make every effort to promote and preserve humankind's common cultural heritage, whether tangible, intangible, natural or man-made. The draft resolution also stresses the need to further the constructive efforts being carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in this area, as it is the international organization most suited to protecting and promoting the cultural heritage for humankind. The draft resolution also calls upon the Director-General of that organization to participate in the discussion of this agenda item at the next session of the General Assembly regarding the work of the organization.

The delegation of Egypt would like to thank all the delegations that participated in the ample discussions on this draft resolution. In particular, we would like to thank the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolution, including Bangladesh, France, Indonesia, Madagascar, the Maldives, Mongolia, Nicaragua, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Yemen.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on something that has already been mentioned several times. This draft resolution contains a number of differences from the original text as submitted to the Secretariat. They do not affect the general import of the draft resolution. But, perhaps, require an explanation. We would have liked to have been consulted, along with the other sponsors, before those changes were introduced into the draft resolution. Some of them change phrasing agreed upon in previous documents of the United Nations; others do not take into account the balance that was achieved in the text. That balance was

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a compromise between the divergent positions that were taken during the negotiations. We would therefore like the following corrections to be made to the text.

In the fourth preambular paragraph, we would like the word "these" to be replaced with the words "host", so that the phrase will read "host communities". In the same paragraph, the word "intensifying" should be replaced by "enhancing" so that the phrase will read "enhancing international cooperation". Those changes bring the draft text back into line with the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit.

In operative paragraph 4, we would like the word "possible" to be added after "explore", so the phrase will read "explore possible ways", in order to reflect a delicate compromise reached in the course of consultations. We would also like the Arabic translation to be revised, because we find many discrepancies between it and the English text.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.59 as orally corrected, entitled "United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage 2002". May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.59 as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/57/L.59, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 57/158).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 23?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 28 (continued)

Assistance in mine action

Draft resolution (A/57/L.53)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly debated this agenda item at the 51st and 52nd plenary meetings, held on 15 and 19 November 2002. I give the floor to the representative of Denmark to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.53.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): On behalf of the European Union and the other sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution on "Assistance in mine action", contained in document A/57/L.53. Since the submission of the draft resolution, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, the Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Suriname, Thailand, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tuvalu, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen, Yugoslavia and Zambia. That makes a total of 108 sponsors.

I have a small correction to operative paragraph 19 of the present draft. The word "or" should be added in the third line, after "United Nations Development Programme". That line should read "supported by the United Nations Development Programme or under the auspices of the". It was submitted in its present form by mistake.

The draft resolution before us today reflects the outcome of constructive consultations with interested delegations. I would like sincerely to thank Belgium for having conducted the negotiations on the draft resolution on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

Bearing in mind the increasing need for assistance in mine action, the importance of this draft resolution — which addresses the vital issue of assistance in mine action, at the international, national and regional levels — is growing.

Allow me briefly to point out the main elements of the draft resolution. The text recognizes the primary role and responsibility of Member States in assistance to mine action and the significant assisting role of the United Nations in this field. It calls more specifically on mine-affected countries to assume their national responsibility in resolving the landmine problem, and it appeals to donor Governments to increase, whenever possible, their international assistance and contributions.

The draft also underlines the humanitarian imperative of mine action and the importance of integrating mine-action activities into broader

humanitarian strategies, especially in emergency situations.

Consequently, the draft resolution encourages the finalization of a United Nations emergency response plan. The draft resolution recognizes that mine action also includes activities in the broader context of development aid. The draft notes with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General and requests him to review in 2003 the United Nations mine-action strategy by seeking the views of Member States.

Finally, the draft resolution stresses the need to convince non-State actors to halt immediately and unconditionally new deployment of anti-personnel mines, and it also requests the development of standard reports on mine action programmes related to the scope and impact of the mine problem, available resources and capacities and the progress achieved in the field.

In view of the importance of assistance in mine action and of the problem of mines and unexploded ordnance in general, it is the hope of the sponsors that this draft resolution will, as in previous years, be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.53, as orally corrected.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.53, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/57/L.53, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 57/159).

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Rodsmoen (Norway): Anti-personnel mines remain a serious cause of human suffering in many parts of the world. Humanitarian mine action is often a prerequisite for peace and reconciliation and for humanitarian assistance and development.

It is of great importance that we continue to address the problems caused by anti-personnel mines by maintaining our efforts on the ground and by focusing on the humanitarian objectives of this work and its practical implementation in the field. Our objective is to prevent mines from claiming new victims and to help the survivors.

While Norway has just joined the consensus on resolution A/57/L.53 on assistance in mine action, there are various aspects of this resolution that we would have liked to see improved. Allow me to reiterate a few elements in this respect.

It is of great importance that available financial and human resources be utilized in an optimal manner. It is crucial that the primary responsibility for mine action, including coordination, lie with the mine-affected countries themselves. This is imperative in making mine action sustainable and effective.

For Norway, the mine-ban Convention is the primary framework for mine action. The Convention contains provisions not only for a total ban on antipersonnel mines, but also on international cooperation and assistance in mine action.

United Nations agencies, regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and various non-governmental organizations all are indispensable actors in humanitarian mine action.

The United Nations Mine Action Service has an important role in securing the integration of mine-action issues in the work of the United Nations system wherever it may be relevant. It is important, however, to make a distinction between the Secretariat's coordinating and mainstreaming work within the United Nations system, and the operative, field-based mine action carried out by the United Nations and by non-governmental organizations.

It is within these areas that we would have welcomed further improvements to A/57/L.53. However, given the overall humanitarian importance of mine action, we decided to join the consensus on this year's resolution.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: My delegation joined the consensus on draft resolution A/57/L.53, entitled "Assistance in mine action". However, we would like to make the following comments.

First, the contents of the report (A/57/430) of the Secretary-General were taken into consideration in the drafting of the resolution. That report, despite the useful information contained therein, is like previous ones in that it focuses on recently planted mines,

ignoring older ones such as those that plague many States, including my country.

During the course of the Second World War, millions of mines were planted in my country, and thousands of people were killed. Those mines continue to pose a threat to the people who live in the affected areas; they contribute to the destruction of property and impede expansion of agricultural fields.

Secondly, my delegation warned of the problems emanating from those mines and drew the attention of the Secretary-General to that problem. We also expressed the hope that the United Nations would accord the necessary attention to older mines. In fact, a mission sent by the Organization to Libya confirmed that millions of mines were planted in Libya by the Allied and Axis forces. Regrettably, the report submitted to this session, like previous ones, focuses only on recently planted mines. My delegation would therefore like once again to reiterate how regrettable we consider that approach to be. We hope that that shortcoming will be avoided in the future, particularly in the framework of the mine-clearance strategy for the period 2001-2005, when attention would hopefully be focused on clearing old mines, which, like those that have recently been planted, cause injury and property damage.

Thirdly, one of the paragraphs in the report refers to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Although we believe that that Convention constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for international action in this area, we did not join it for many reasons, in particular because it ignored the very important aspect of the security of large States that cannot otherwise protect themselves. Furthermore, the Convention makes no provision whatsoever with regard to the legal responsibility of colonial States to clear the mines that they planted in the territory of other States. My delegation hopes that the States parties to the Convention will try to overcome those shortcomings so that the universality of that Convention can be achieved.

Mr. Wang Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The delegation of China joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/57/L.53, entitled "Assistance in mine action". China fully understands the humanitarian concerns of the international community regarding the indiscriminate injury to innocent civilians caused by anti-personnel landmines. China supports international efforts to address that problem. For that reason, China ratified the amended landmines Protocol to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and strictly abides by it.

We believe that the indiscriminate use of landmines and the ineffectiveness of post-war demining efforts are cause for serious humanitarian concern. Such concerns can be addressed in two ways. First, we should prevent the indiscriminate use of landmines and ensure the universal and effective implementation of the amended landmines Protocol to the CCW. Secondly, we should actively demine those deployed landmines that are not in conformity with the provisions of the amended landmine Protocol. In recent years, China has been actively engaged in international demining assistance with a view to helping mine-affected countries and to alleviating their suffering. In the past two years we have donated demining equipment to seven mine-affected countries — Angola, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia and Rwanda. The Chinese Government also plans to donate demining equipment to Lebanon. China sent a demining expert team to Eritrea for on-site demining training so as to help that mine-affected country to build on and enhance its demining capacity. In November this year, China sent another demining expert team to Afghanistan to investigate the situation there.

The Chinese Government would like to continue to cooperate in exchanging experience with interested countries and international organizations on humanitarian demining assistance and to make further contributions to international demining action.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 28?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 38 (*continued*)

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Draft resolutions (A/57/L.20/Rev.1, A/57/L.27/Rev.1)

Reports of the Fifth Committee (A/57/645, A/57/646)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on this agenda item at the 47th and 50th plenary meetings on 11 and 14 November 2002.

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/57/L.20/Rev.1 is contained in document A/57/645.

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1 is contained in document A/57/646.

I give the floor to the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the delegation of Mexico to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), contained in document A/57/L.27/Rev.1. In addition to the countries appearing in the revised text of the draft, which we are introducing today, I would like to inform the Assembly that the delegations of El Salvador, Slovenia and Ireland have also joined the list of sponsors.

On 29 December 1996, 36 years of internal conflict ended in Guatemala with the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. That Agreement was the result of a six-year negotiating process under the auspices of the United Nations, and provided for a series of political, military, legislative, social, economic, agrarian, ethnic and cultural measures, which included a broad national agenda for peace.

Since then, as a result of the decision of the parties, the United Nations has played a fundamental role in the peace process, verifying compliance with the commitments undertaken in the Agreement. The presence of MINUGUA has been very positive. The parties and Guatemalan society have recognized that the United Nations, through that Mission, has contributed a degree of certainty and trust to the implementation of the Peace Agreement, as shown by the long list of sponsors of the draft resolution. The draft resolution that we are introducing today makes reference to previous General Assembly resolutions and relevant reports of the Secretary-General, and to reports of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). It highlights progress achieved in the peace process, as well as challenges remaining, and refers to the responsibility of the parties and of Guatemalan society as a whole to make a national effort to ensure that the peace process will be irreversible. The draft also refers to the importance that the international community has granted to the fulfilment of the pending commitments within the new timeframe through the end of 2004. It also asks the international community to provide financial support in order to strengthen national capacity.

The draft proposes that an extension of the MINUGUA mandate be authorized for one additional year, from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003, in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendations. Additionally, in the draft the door is left open for a possible extension of the mission's mandate through the end of 2004, taking into account the request made along these lines by the Guatemalan Government and civil society, in view of the fact that at the beginning of this year there will be a new Government. Therefore, the draft welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to carry out consultations with regard to those requests with interested Member States, aiming at the consolidation of the peace process after 31 December 2003.

I would like to make a last-minute technical correction to the draft resolution. I am referring to a correction related to the dates set for the next meeting of the Consultative Group for Guatemala, which appears in operative paragraph 8. I understand that the meeting, which is referred to in this paragraph, has been postponed to June or July. Hence, please replace the words "for March 2003" with the words "for the middle of 2003". In addition, I wish to say that in submitting the draft resolution to the Secretariat, my delegation submitted English and Spanish texts simultaneously, but the draft under consideration lists only English as the original language.

We have also noted that some modifications were made in the Spanish text, and they were done without the knowledge of the co-sponsors. We would therefore ask the Secretariat to review this question and to make the corresponding adjustments.

Finally, let me point out that Guatemala has been a successful experience for the United Nations. The parties have provided an unequivocal proof of their commitment to the peace process. As has already been said, considerable progress has been achieved, but there are still challenges ahead. The sponsors therefore trust that this draft resolution will receive unanimous support in the Assembly.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/57/L.20/Rev.1 and A/57/L.27/Rev.1 as orally corrected.

We turn first to draft resolution A/57/L.20/Rev.1, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development". I should like to announce that since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/57/L.20/Rev.1: Belize, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.20/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/57/L.20/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 57/160).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala", as orally corrected. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1 as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1 as orally corrected was adopted (resolution 57/161).

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Last 11 November, I addressed this Assembly to make a substantive presentation in favour of extending the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for the year 2003. In addition, I reiterated the request of President Alfonso Portillo of Guatemala, presented in this same Hall, with regard to considering the further extension of the mandate until the end of 2004. The only purpose of my statement today is to express our appreciation for the decision just taken with the adoption of resolution A/57/L.27/Rev.1 with the oral amendment introduced by Mexico.

Our appreciation is directed, first of all, to our Mexican colleagues, who coordinated the consultations on the text reflected in this resolution; secondly, to the countries that form part of the friends of the Guatemalan peace process, which joined Mexico in this endeavour; thirdly, to all countries which co-sponsored the resolution; last but not least, to all Member States of this plenary, who have not only approved the extension of MINUGUA's mandate for another year, but have also left the door open to consider a positive response to our request that the presence of the United Nations be extended until the end of 2004, in order to be present during the first year of the new Government that will take office as of January of that year.

For our part, we reiterate our political commitment to move ahead with the action contemplated in the peace accord, and to cooperate with the United Nations in the next phase, in which the functions of MINUGUA will gradually be transferred to national entities. We will also cooperate with the Secretary-General in responding as required to the consultations referred to in paragraph 25, in order to determine the exact date of MINUGUA's final withdrawal from Guatemala.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 38.

Agenda item 168

International Year of Rice, 2004

Draft resolution (A/57/L.58/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International Year of Rice, 2004", contained in document A/57/L.58/Rev.1. At this point, however, I wish to point out a typographical omission in the title of the draft resolution. In that regard, the year "2004" should be added to the title of the draft resolution after the words "international year of rice"

so that the title reads "International Year of Rice, 2004".

First of all, I wish to thank all the delegations that contributed to the formulation of the draft resolution before us. The draft resolution, which is an offshoot of a draft resolution adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in November 2001, is straightforward, declaring 2004 the International Year of Rice. It also invites the FAO to facilitate the implementation of the International Year of Rice in collaboration with Governments and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as non-governmental organizations.

By declaring 2004 the International Year of Rice, the sponsors of this draft resolution believe that impetus will be provided for promoting various activities related to the production and consumption of rice as well as recognition of the inter-relationship between rice and the alleviation of hunger, malnutrition and poverty. According to the FAO, more than 800 million people in the world suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Most of them live in areas that are dependent upon rice production for food, income and employment — hence the urgent need to heighten the level of awareness of the importance of rice.

Finally, I wish to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1, the following countries have joined the list of sponsors: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Mali, the Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Togo, Viet Nam and Zambia. In that regard, we all seek the General Assembly's adoption of draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1 by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/57/L.58/Rev.1, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 57/162).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 168?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to make an announcement regarding the consideration of the reports of the Main Committees to the General Assembly.

In the morning of Wednesday, 18 December 2002, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the Third Committee. In the morning of Friday, 20 December 2002, the General Assembly will consider the reports of the Second Committee.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.